

0 3 July 27, 1953 0 Treaty at Parununjohn, Korea 0 0

45 In darkening bronze three men sit at a white table. Above a white Umbrella floats. In the middle of the table... what seems to be an antique-gold pyramid. The three, outlined in bronze grains of trembling light, are laughing in a jazzy, synchopated way. What happens to laughter at such a time when purple insinuate sooty golds and deer watch from the mouth of a far wood? Yeah. Right. Korea. Land of the Morning Calm. And afternoon. Evening too. Oh yeah! At least after the war when alls you could do is sit around and fart for entertainment. Not like my first tour there when we got our assholes reamed from the Yalu River to sweet-smelling Pusan. But I was infantry then, gentlemen, a soldier! Not yet among you 4F commandos of the ordinance Corps, tucking up all manner of weapons and jeeps. That happened in Vietnam. where they sent a killer to repair binoculars! IT What a waste! The speaker adds a beer can to the flickering pyramid of beer cans in the center of the white table. Well hell now! You two old sergeants liked the smell of Pusan. Reminded you of your Rebel homes. The two other men chuckle, make waving toasts in the deepening light, these gestures telling him to go on. They use shit for fertilizer there, as you two grizzlies know I'm sure. Effectively. Got stuck out one night on maneuvers. @ , carved out a squash and slept in it. So it's bad! No one drunk is saying anything. Hey I'm playing-but I'm heading to a story that's deadly fuckin serious. But don't

46 sweat it cause it never happened. Well it did but it didn't. All you have to know in this world is what didn't happen. Anyways what did happen, believe it or not, is that the war ended just about when I eased into my second tour there. why they sent me: End the war! Yes Sir! Right away Sir! Well you're wrong cause I'm half serious, cause you and me and all the other sergeants run the fuckin army which is conveniently forgotten in Hell peace time. /in wartime too. oh what am I talking about? Preaching to the converted. Christ Almighty worse than a crying drunk or something. Let me fish another brew out here. He pushes aside a hunk of black, bobbing ice to get a dripping can. Pops the tab and the tiny spray picks up flecks of purple light. The umbrella, W@ @ seen, hangs above. So we all know it's true, goddamn straight true: The old sergeant is basic! Basic! You know something? Besides this being a mighty small pyramid for a trio of professional drinkers like us? You know, kids said I could never ask the basic questions. most lately about Vietnam naturally. Nam! Here's my toast to the most fucked up war in this nation's lifetime. Besides ruining the country and all that shit it ruined my life too. M it, @eq - Busted up my marriage, lost me a son up in Canada. @A Can you imagine? Fuckin Canada? You don't have to tell me about family. You don't have to tell me about country. The other son he went to Nam and now he hates me for it, like I engineered the whole war or something. Aint that some shit? They spit on him when he got back. In San Francisco airport they spit on him. Welcome to the world of soldiering. My country right or wrong! And who gives a shit?

47 That there's the question for all time. And the answer is I do. The Sergeant. And all that shit pouring out of the TV about Vietnam! And never the soldier's side, the trooper's! The kid soldier maybe, orybaby, but never the trooper's. He takes what's given. Drop him down anywhere and @ gets it fuckin done! It's only politics takes time. Fuckin Vietnam! What happened to us? The professionals lost! War's our trade and we lost at it. Yeah yeah yeah so I'm telling you old sergeants again what you know, but you gotta be reminded. Maybe that last reminding'll pull the barrel out of your mouth. Right or put it in there. Take your choice. Fuck it! Open up your eyes and look at those deer out there. Ever see anything that fuckin beautiful? Here's to them and good company and this beautiful light. Right at this minute this is the best and on earth. Yeah ... there was a lot wrong in Nam and not just cause the politicians were always dragging your balls down. There was the leadership there. I come close to fragging one little sucker I tell you. Whoops, getting my wars mixed up: That was Korea. But I know about a lot of fragging in Nam. Temporary cures.

Hey, we tell the truth to each other but we don't foul the nest. So I'm drunk! So what! I'm paetdrunk but you know what I'm talking about. After after after look at my hand shaking the politicians do their dance and the people give up, then there's us. Us. We take what's given and do something with it. It ti Think about that falls his voice, falls and the black woods themselves seem to moan, the deer in pale silver outline lifting up their heads. I knew it all once. Hey when you're young and full of hot shit ready

48 to explode you know it all. Like this young lieutenant in Korea. Skipper. de got on my case a lot of times back then. Twenty years ago? And for what? Not asking the basic questions or however it was expressed back then. Like suits change their fuckin styles, yo+now? I don't know. Something I was doing wrong or thinking wrong that al *he young pissers knew, was born knowing. oh yeah! Hey! Can't even see you guys now. Well, just. Knew I'd get a break if I waited long enough. Now what the hell's that approaching? That come up out of Chesapeake Bay or something? Haldi Who fuckin goes there? Two barely-discernable men with silvery sticks come towards the 7n. I'll shush. Sorry about that. Didn't know this here was the post golf course. Just come over here cause they had the enlisted men's club closed for renovations. Expanding it for the next war. Pardon me I sing. what makes the grass grow so green/ in Aberdeen? / Chickenshit As light breathing is heard one ball clinks into a cup ... another. They're playing by braille you ask me. I did that plenty but not on no golf course. ok; iy okay okay don't be some damn picky. I'll get back to *he squirt lieutenant but you're gonna wish I didn't cause you're gonna find out something you don't wanna know. You guys is hard, but nobody's hard enough. So it was Skipper in Korea. Aint that some name for a man? But what the fuck it was the new amy back then. Aint it always? Always new everything everywhere. Can't keep fuckin up with it except it's always S. O. S. Same ole shit. Anyways when you're young you're fuckin unique and that's al)ffiere is to it. You think you're some kind of angel but there's nothing you won't do. Screw a snake and say it was for science. And it's a wonder the lady's crotches don't melt out of their pants with you a hundred yards away.

50 managed to find twenty gallons? Then five pairs of binoculars got us a couple of cases of oranges from a navy ship at Pusan. Hey! Since we took our chances on the plague let the swabies flirt around with scurvy. Hemorrhagic fever they called it, from the fleas of rats. I guess we all remember plopping down into foxholes in the middle of drowned and poisoned rats. JUst so some guy'd feel safe in his Cadillac) and a mortar won't be lobbed between him and Honey in a bed at the Bluebird Motel. But we protect everybody we just aint sensitive is all. So, old Sergeants, some not so old sergeants celebrated the end of the Korean War with screwdrivers in a fifty five gallon drum with its top cut off. Everything in excess. Hell if I could drop this bunch of grizzlies back there now we wouldn't miss a beat. Most of my life seems to consist of going back and doing thing I did before, walking up to somebody you haven't seen in twenty years and saying something like hey, you was telling me how the old lady tucked you up good. She complete the job yet? But fuck all that cause we was dipping in there with big mess cups, big blue ice bobbing around in all that dusky orange just like this ice beside me now melting down and cooling i can feeeeeeeelllll no more fuckin beer. Tough titty. And twenty plus years between two pretty blue hunks of ice and... the same hunk. No years. All of life is fuckin deja vu, soldier's life anyways. well anyways, all you heard back then were sipping noises and sighs and we wanted to go on that way forever in that dark green air of that buttoned up tent where you had to drink cause you couldn't breathe. Once in a while you'd hear a dogface yell, but from further away than those deer. They was playing basketball while us sergeants drank ourselves senseless for our country.

49 And all the while there you are just firing those basic questions all over the lot. Hundred a minute. unless you're a soldier and it's fuck the basic questions or whatever you warma: call them cause if you're a soldier you got the only security.

Follow the orders and forget the shit behind them. And if the orders don't make no sense nohow, well then we know just how to do nothing, or just how to Stepinfetchit till the officers get the right ideas. That's our science and it aint in any book or on TV neither. You feel your way through this fuckin life. That's the fuckin art of it. And yet with my wife and boys ... ? Aint it though? A real complicated life. I agree: C is a good grade But I want A in everything and that's why my guts grind I guess. Well anyways this fuckbrain lieutenant, this Skipper, he really got to me the day the Korean War ended. Twenty seven July nineteen and fifty three if I aint mistaken, gentlemen. I was kinda inside a big booze bore like this, no offense. It's just that we're warhorses, not built to watch fairy captains putt in their bermuda shorts.

But let anybody shoot for any hole they want, right? The golfers leave in their cars, headlights momentarily picking out shifting pockets of mist. In one the deer nibble leaves; hia voice and the no&-droning cars as natural sounds to them, luzling. KK Anyways they had stopped playing games at Pqwuh@Xk and we got out of that war. In anticipation of which, in anticipation of which I had been working on a chrome-plated forty-five to trade to Quartermaster for alcohol. Legal as you old ordinance types know for cleaning lenses. I w,,Dapped the requisition around the pretty gun and would you believe they Then someone pushes a flap aside and you could see these kids up against the absolute fuckin gold of the rice paddies. Knock your eye out and those screwdrivers sliding downi You bank those moments and draw on them for a lifetime. And I don't mean just the drinking but what everything looks like and the stories until the quiet settles in and it gets all ... stretchy ... I don't know, the time I mean. I don't know how to say it but it's living at any rate. So in all that lovely green and orange and blue funk I'm in the middle of the longest f@ckin 6@it ever whatchacalilit , exhaled by man when in busts this fuckbrain squirt shavetail lieutenant, this Skipper. Get the troops to the messhall compulsory lecturell The war's over and he's going by the book. Nowl It's a historic first for him. Ilcls gonna read the semon tht division and the pentagon sends down in a kit and with all the answers answered for you if anybody's stupid enough to @ DLV ask. You know, A we had to stop Charlie in Chunchon or held rape every woman and hall@@he men in the shopping plazas around Atlanta. Well you know the shit that they said, and in Nam too, though they was called on it there.

IL And you kno,- +here's no reason for a war, gentlemen. The war's the reason. Two deer approach them, their coat.9 twitching in darkest silver. Cl7non elmon, come next to me. Don't be afraid. Come. But it didn't do no good to tell him Hey, Lieutenantl War's over. All bets are offill I was shouting then too, but there was no deer to ran away, just sweating GIs and ossified sergeants. And I was tedling him what you never should say, that the dogfaces don't give a shit about the fuckin propaganda. They'd just as soon listen to the other side's. But soon we were all siti-i0ftg there, all ams and legs and stinting breath and I

52 soaking fatigues. Armpits and assholesi But he went on and on with the stupid lecture till I couldn't stand it no more. Hey Lieutenantl These poor dogfaces don't care about Communism. And the gooks don't know what it is neither and they was fighting for it. We're all ftickin dogfaces and all we know is we haven't been killed. So why not we all have a fuckin drink. And you come back to the sergeant's tent... ll Communistsi Nazisl Shitt How many times have I listened to the asshole wisdom of officers and smiled my sergeant's smile like it was nailed to my fuckin mouth? But the other guys is badl Badi No fuckin doubt. I transported a German prisoner and we got lost for a week crawling through bombed out cities looking for women and booze. I'm godfather to his yowest, a girl with her own girl now. He's still a sergeant of course. He assu%es another voice and -, -,the other two sergeants shift in their metal oh42irs. Your opinions are interesting, Sergeant. We will go into them and any other questions in the context of the question and answer period.1 And I'll tell you something, he had started with a shriek and ended in a fuckin wandering whisper and right then I knew I did a bad fuckin thing cause the sonofabitch was

cracking and he was trying to give discipline to himself, really, to the troopers too, but mostly to hold himself together. And then he's r@bling and his eyes ... terrified. Alls you could see was whitest He even woke the troops up,so fuckin crazy was his act. Next he's running out of there with me chasing. I had my own kids. I'm going to make it right cause my pride's in killing people, not hurting them. That'd sound weird to anybody else but I can say it to you guys. It's one of the things I gotta say. And you two know now what I knew back then, that I'd Ive turned myself inside out to make it right, that if I had any idea he was

53 so shaky

I'd Ive listened to the stupid lecture for hours and not tucked around at all. It's one of the things that's burned the shit out of my life. Are there others? I wondered when you twold start pulling my leg. Anywa,ys I had dismissed the dogfaces before I started to run after the crazy lieutenant and I could hear them buzzing back there while I'm fuckin panting cause he's leading me@abk into a little canyon back of our company area and right then I'm getting mixed feelings had cause I/dumped (ut a lot of shit I didn't feel like inventorying-little replacement lenses and shit like that. And now these lenses@and here fuckin begins the part you won't believe@commence glowing under bushes and weeds, blue glowing. He's still running and screaming to high heaven about nothing,but all the starch just goes out of my legs and I just fuckin sink down there where I'm at, and the air turns- -I don't know@wfglrd, like before a thunderstorm. And now I'm yelling. @Skipperl Sonlll And he turns around with those fuckin white cr@ eyes and all of a sudden fuffffffl He's all fuckin white blotches of fire, a string. He drops like a rock and these blot%es skitter off him and roll around the whole fuckin place and rolling over those lenses and making them like blue water, melting them and the aluminum casings too. And fuc@Smoke is rising from Skipperl @Sonlll I scream the fuckin loudest I can scream and these medics are rushing by me and where the fuck did they come from? And then this one-star slitty-eye general plants himself in front of mc. I'm roaring-hysterically st sirl The lieutenantlll A streetlight goes on an4d shapes co7ne and go in the Mist looking like old nen and iiareathing children. @Phe lieuten4antril be all right. Fine. No @Sweat. ArLd ... nothing happened, you got that? You've been arounco ong enough to know what I mean. Everythinglll be fine.ll

54 I knew that they had tucked up

their little exercise, thit they thought they were miles from any GIs. With their fuckin shooting-around blotches of white firel It was horrible ... and that's why I'm so fuckin happy it never happened. Like a lot of things that happened and it's nice to know they didn't right? That's what they call History. But P6 didn't happen and Skipper doesn't check into a veterans hospital everyaDnth or so for tests. He's dead probably, by now. And I get about five strep throats a year but I don't. Didn't some Hitler doctor pour concrete into ounts? Education'll save the world. Aint it a strange love though? Soon the three men will sleep, their heads on the table; the deer will be gone. @Skipper!iiehe will spout in his sleep and the other two will mu%ble./FAnd then he'll whisper @Mickey oh little Mickey. Let me go down in the water with you where you drowned. I'll go down in the water there and tell you I love you.ll